Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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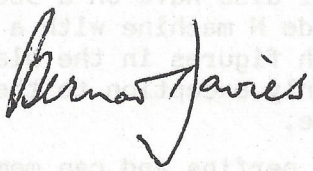
EDITORIAL

The Editor thought it was too good to last. For the December issue he had some spare material and therefore the possibility of choice in the selection of the magazine's contents. Moreover, for once, he did not have to write "filler" articles himself. However the surplus has now been used up and the cupboard is as bare as Mother Hubbard's. We therefore make a plea, more shrill than usual, to write something for YOUR magazine. This newsletter is an entirely amateur production, put together and printed by volunteers; these volunteers cannot be expected to go on beating their heads against brick walls for the fun of it - i.e. as the lunatic said "It's nice when you stop." Material for publication is urgently required.

The next meeting of the Central American Group takes place at the Victory Services Club from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday 24th March. We hope for a good attendance to see an interesting and varied programme. We would like to see some new exhibitors. Please join us if you possibly can, and even better bring a few sheets to exhibit if you can. If you are shy, don't be! You may talk if you want to do so, but no-one will force you to give a lecture about your stamps if you are shy of public speaking. In our experience exhibitors talk too much, not too little! If you have only two or three sheets to show, that doesn't matter, either, and no-one will be super-critical about your technique of display. The usual C.A. exhibitors are standing by with different material to keep the pot boiling, but we do hope for new faces and different displays. If you believe in the Group's objects, please help - at the meeting or with articles or Causerie for the next issue of the magazine.



Editor

* If you can attend on March 24th for only part of the time, you will nevertheless be very welcome.

MISCELLANEOUS NICARAGUA ITEMS by DR DEREK POCOCK

1. SG608 Correos 1929 1 cent on 5 cent telegraph with additional "R de T": error tall "1" in surcharge occurs in position 78, and "10" for "01" occurs at position 95. However my sheet does not show Gibbons error SG608b "0.0"; was there another printing or did a 1 fall out during the run? I have not seen a copy of SG608b.

SG612 Correos 1929 2 cents on 5 cents telegraph: Stamps 9 and 99 in the sheet show the error "0$0.02" for "C$0.02" as also does No.67, but the latter is a narrow "0" error, compared with the wide "0" on 9 and 99.

2. The forgeries of the first issue make an interesting little study. All values exist as a crude litho reproduction and the likely perpetrator is Mr Spiro of Hamburg, as they bear many of his benchmarks. The 2 cents exists in deep blue and shows crossed "guide lines" at all corners. They are crudely perforated 11½-12½ and may be cancelled with a void grid, a pattern of square dots, or 2 types of four concentric circles.

Similarly the 5 cents obviously from the same plate with PORTE in both side panels! Perfs vary from 9 - 13. However another litho forgery exists and this time correctly inscribed Correos in the left panel: for variety these examples fail to show the liberty cap on the central mountain peak.

The 1 cent, 10 cent and 25 cent all exist apparently from the same source. Here virtually the only cancellation is the void grid. For all three the colours are at marked variance to the genuine stamps. A remarkable feature of all these three values is the sun rays which are highlighted compared to the originals to an extent that considerably increases their number (15 in the forged 10 cent and 17 in the 25 cent).

My guess is they were produced in sheets of 25 (5 x 5) as were the similar West Australian stamps, but I have never seen a sheet of any of the Nicaraguan values.

3. I should like to return to the alleged bogus issue of VALE/un centavo/de cordoba on the 2 cent vermilion of 1914. I have managed to accumulate 15 copies and all save one are apparently genuinely used. One shows a clear Managua Jan 7th 1923 c.d.s.. The errors are interesting: inverted, VALB, surcharge double and "do" for "de". If they are bogus, they are an interesting emission and would fit in well with the 1 cent tax stamps in the series starting SG448 through to 494.

4. Nicaragua has few perfins and are mainly found on the 1920 fiscals. There is a large CANCEL(.....) but which I also have on a 50c Resello 1927. Other than this there seems to have been an R de N machine with a variable second line beneath which usually reads ....+.... with figures in the blank areas. I have 3˚+2˚, ...+˚20 and 10˚+ .... Here the only exception to the fiscal stamps is a 20 cent brown of the 1922 Cathedrals issue.

Did Nicaragua have any commercial perfins and can members add further details to the above from their holdings?

5. 1899 Coils! Two copies of the 1899 2 cent definitive (both used) show an interesting perforating flaw at top and bottom such that alternate pins appear to be missing creating a perf 6 instead of 12. At some point the shadow outline of the missing pin can be seen giving an effect like the POKO coil machines of the Netherlands.

6. There appears to be another Correos-1908 overprint on the large (official) fiscal stamps SG type 051. In violet it appears as a vertical handstamp on the 1c indigo 35mm long in letters 4 (capital C and 1908) and 3mm (orreos) high. My 2 copies bear a part oval cancellation.

7. An overprint on the 2cent Momotombo of 1900, reading Impresto de/ Camiros/Vale $10. It is heavily cancelled with the ornate wreath around the triangular symbol of Nicaragua. Can anyone identify this marking - no doubt some early fiscal usage.

8. Little seems to have been written about the registration markings of Nicaragua either the cachets, etiquettes, rates or (to a less extent) the postmarks.
Perhaps as a start I might begin with the etiquettes which seem to exist for fairly narrow periods of Nicaraguan postal history. I have identified four types of etiquettes.

Type 1: Printed in red. These are perforated 11 on 3 or 4 sides with a tall (12mm) R at the left, and 3 lines in the centre:- a) "Nicaragua" in italic script b) No. ..... and c) Gram ..... At the right edge reading upwards is the town. The outer frame measures 42 x 20mm. This is the etiquette seen on p10 of Newsletter No.11 (March 1983). So far I have seen these from 9 towns as follows with the time of use in parentheses. Bluefields (1911), Corinto (1914), Granada (1916), Leon (1911 & 1919), Managua (1911-12), Masaya (1912), Matagalpa (1912), Ocotal (1915) and Rama (1914).

Type 2: Printed in blue green in similar style to Type 1, but the R is more chunky and only 10mm high; the word Recommande replaces Nicaragua at top centre and the frame size is 42 x 22mm. Examples known so far are from Leon (1915) and Granada (1913).

Type 3: A smaller production (40 x 16·5mm) with thick, blue-black outer frame, R at left and box for No. with "Managua-Nicaragua" in small letters at the bottom. This is a 1931 date and I have no others of this style.

Type 4: Finally an imperforate etiquette in black, otherwise almost identical to the first type of 1911's. It measures 43 x 21mm and my only example is from Granada in 1939.

Obviously this listing can be extended to further towns and a wider period of usage. Nevertheless I am slightly surprised at the infrequency of these labels compared to the variety of rubber cachets in use from the early 1900's to late '40's and probably current. I shall try and deal with these cachets in another note as well as illustrate them, as I believe this is an important field to examine for any specialist publication on Nicaragua that may eventuate from the Central American Groups combined researches.

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OLD CAUSERIE Richard Washburn says that, following the comment on his CROATIA postal card by Doug Bayliss, the copy of a letter he received from Hapag-Lloyd may be of interest:-

"Dear Mr Washburn

We acknowledge receipt of your letter of June 27th.-
SMS "Croatia" was in service from 1889 until 1906 when she was sold to Furness. In 1907 Hapag bought her back and again sold her in 1911 to an owner in Stettin.-

After 1918 she was sold for several times to Holland, Germany, Turkey etc. and finally wrecked 1961 in Italy.

The voyage in question started in Hamburg on February 8th 1904 via Grimsby, Havre to St Thomas and further via S. Domingo, Pto.Plata, Pto. Prince and Livingstone (including some small ports) to La Ceiba were she arrived on March 23rd.
This was the last port on the outward voyage from which she returned to Hamburg arriving here on May 3rd 1904.

Length 88,5 m
2.870 BRT

We hope that this information will help you.

Yours faithfully

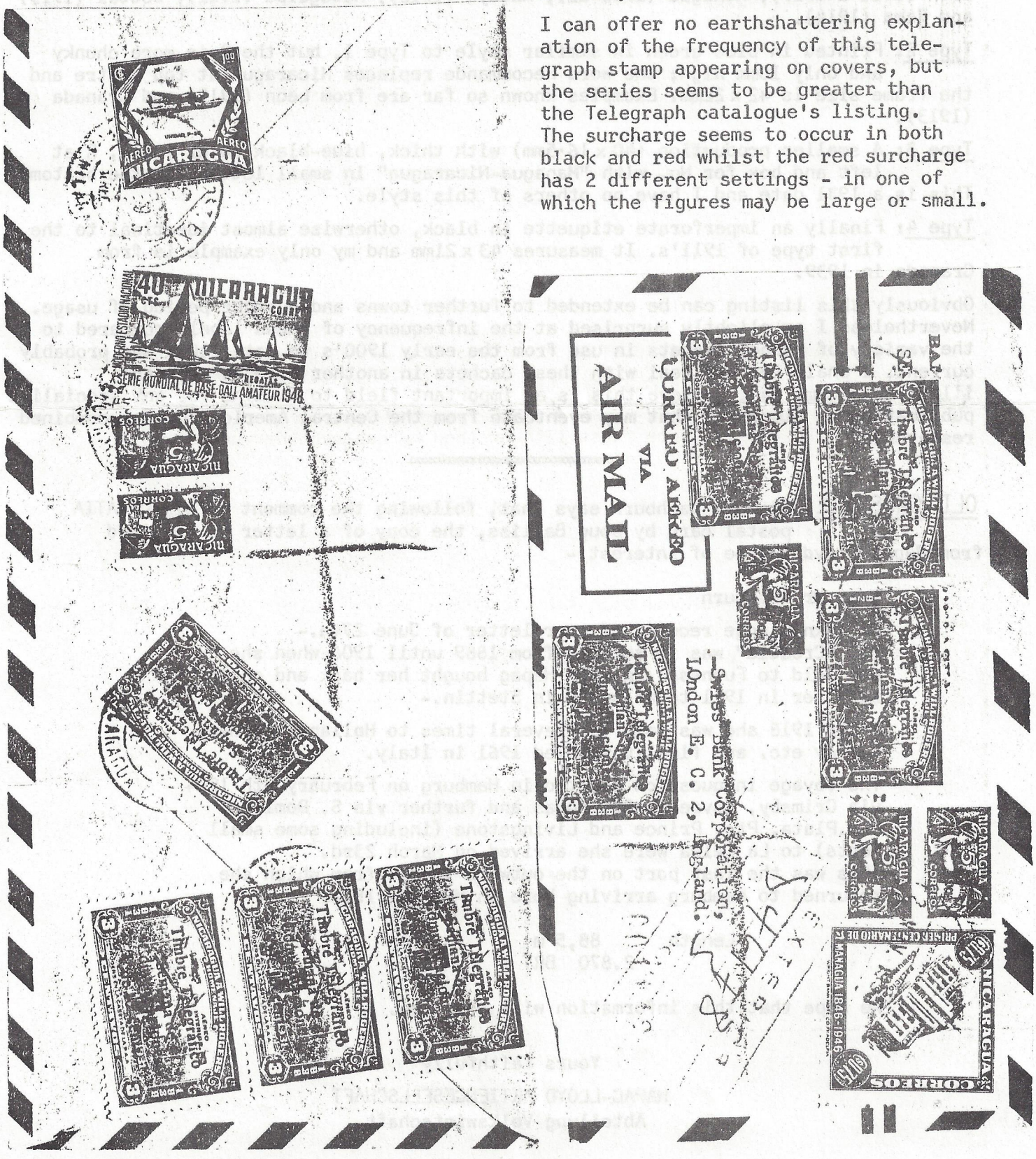
HAPAG-LLOYD AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT
Abteilung Volkswirtschaft

1201 (Harold Walker on W Rogers 36 telegraph surcharges - a reply from Dr Derek Pocock)

I have two covers - actually one is a back and the other a front but are different correspondence - one with 85c of these stamps being 50c + (2 x 15c) + 5c additional to to 75 cents postage and 15 cents social tax, the other with C1 45 cents being C1 + (3 x 15c) additional to C1 40c postage and 10c social tax. None of these telegraph surcharges bear a B or D overprint, but both items are registered air mail from 1955.

A comprehensive listing of Nicaraguan telegraphs appears in the recent catalogue of Dr S E R Hiscocks, and he lists 6 surcharge values in the set, all on the 3c Will Rogers. In addition he refers to a red A overprint and a green G overprint. I had advised him of the yellow B and now can add D.

I can offer no earthshattering explanation of the frequency of this telegraph stamp appearing on covers, but the series seems to be greater than the Telegraph catalogue's listing. The surcharge seems to occur in both black and red whilst the red surcharge has 2 different settings - in one of which the figures may be large or small.



continued from page 4

	Black	Red as black but with large figures	Red large figures only
5c	✓ and/or with Red A		large
10c	✓ and/or Yellow B		large
15c	✓	✓	small
25c	with Green G		large small
50c	✓		-
C1			-

Unfortunately I am unable to decipher Mr Walker's items from the reproduction - neither the denominations or the colour of the surcharges. So the D may be on a 50c, and the B on a 15c - as my own copy. On his cover the stamps on the back appear uncancelled whereas my own 2 pieces are both postmarked with the rest of the stamps. Another (typical) Nicaraguan puzzle.

MORE THAN ONE WAY OF SKINNING A CAT by LEO (UK) HARRIS

I have often thought that the footnotes to be found in the various Stanley Gibbons catalogues are ambiguous, lack clarity and suffer from other shortcomings when seeking to distinguish dies, varieties, redrawn designs, forgeries and the like.

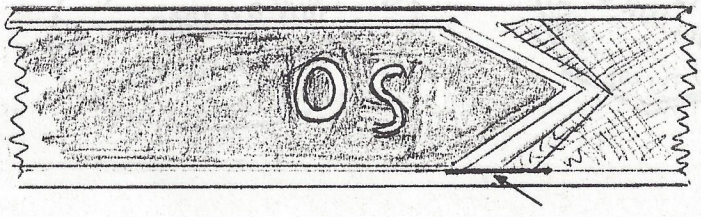
So it proved when I came to make a study of the 1928 set of the Dominican Republic, SG258-265, the footnote to which is SG says:-

> "The 1c, 2c and 10c were first lithographed by Lepervanche and issued in October and then redrawn and lithographed by Ferrua and issued with the other values in December. The differences lie in the number of horizontal lines in the side ornaments."

I tried to distinguish the two printings using the method above described, but not having a sufficiently sophisticated magnifier to measure the number of lines in a given distance, I gave up. Since there was said to be a redrawn design and two printers involved I concluded that there ought to be something else enabling me to distinguish the two printings.

I did discover another difference, more easily to be seen, in the copies I had of this issue. The tablet at the base of the stamp bearing the value in words in white on a coloured background has a frameline round it. The irregularly-shaped shaded tablet to the right (looking at the stamp) does not. In some copies I examined I found at the right hand end, a short line joining the frameline around the large tablet to the lowest point of the shaded tablet. I found this on only the 1c, 2c and 10c values and on no other values. I re-examined all copies of these three values; some had the short connecting line and others had not, leading me to the conclusion that the copies with the short connecting line might be the Lepervanche printing.

not to scale



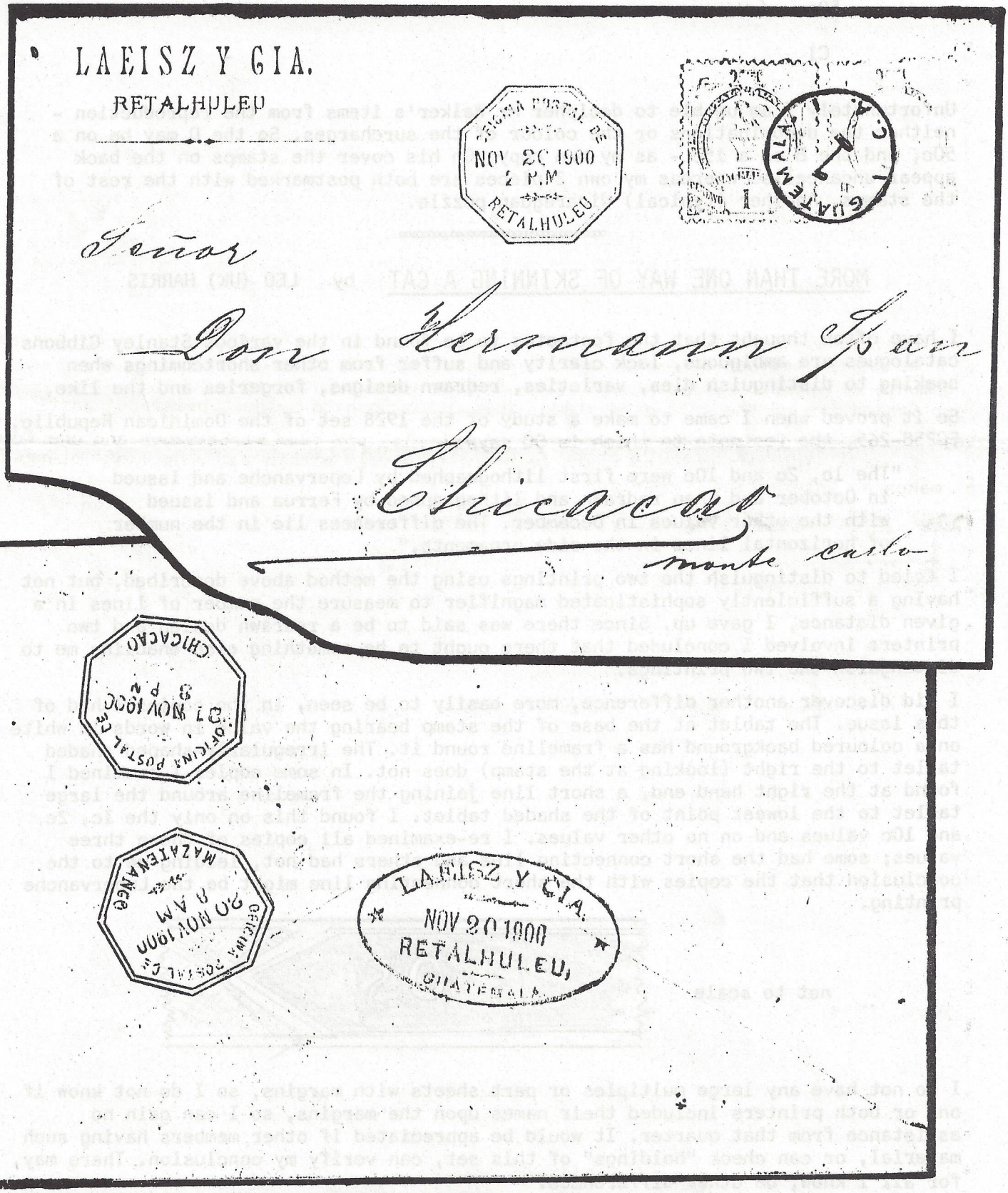
I do not have any large multiples or part sheets with margins, so I do not know if one or both printers included their names upon the margins, so I can gain no assistance from that quarter. It would be appreciated if other members having such material, or can check "holdings" of this set, can verify my conclusion. There may, for all I know, be other differences.

LARGE TYPE NUMERAL "1" AND "2" IN CIRCLES "USED IN GUATEMALA CITY ONLY"

by QUETZAL

Following the article in CA Newsletter issue No.14 of December 1983, a further cover from RETALHULEU to CHICACAO has turned up. It is dated Nov. 20, 1900 and backstamped MAZATENANGO 20 Nov. 1900 and CHICACAO 21 Nov. 1900 (see illustration below).

This surely now conclusively proves that these cancelers were used both in Guatemala City and Retalhuleu.



NEW CAUSERIE

1501 Leo (UK) Harris writes - "I have in my collection one telegraph stamp which is not listed in S E R Hiscocks' "Telegraph & Telephone Stamps of the World". It is a 4 centavos value, in the same design and colour as the American Bank Note Co. printing of 1934. However, in the tablets in the upper left and right corners appears the year "1969" instead of "1934". It is lithographed on white wove unwatermarked paper perforated 14 instead of 12, as in the 1934 printing. The printer's imprint, below the design in the centre, reads "SETELIPAINO, HELSINKI". I have not come across this printer before and according to the catalogues, they have not printed any Finnish stamps. I note however, that the 1966 Stamp Centenary postal issue of Honduras was printed by the State Bank Note Printing Works, Helsinki. Many of the subsequent postal issues are just annotated "Litho" without ascribing any printer to them.

It would be of interest to know whether there are any other values in this series, or whether it was just a "one-off"; it may not even have been issued. Is anything known of this particular printer in the context of stamp printing?"

OLD CAUSERIE

1003 Doug Bayliss suggests re Honduras 157 and 157a, that while SG says they are perf 12, Minkus says "usually perf 14", so take your pick. Both catalogues mention the 1913-15 2 on 5c Official as existing perf 12, but Doug notes that neither catalogue suggests a price. Doug also suggests that printers' records might establish why the 1 peso of the 1911 issue was supplied perf 12, and the 2c and 5c in two different perfs.

1403 Leo, re SG206 Honduras, calls forth from Doug Bayliss the comment that he too has an imperf between of this stamp in an unused pair. The perfs are badly out of alignment, and portions of two other stamps appear; also there is a punched hole in the upper frame line of the left-hand stamp. This leads Doug to suspect printers' waste.

1401 Ken Giles supplies other commemorative cancels, one from El Salvador and one from Ecuador. The latter being South American is hardly within our sphere of interest, but makes an interesting comparison.

Sesquicentenario del Primer Grito de Independencia en Hispanoamérica
10 de Agosto - Quito - 1809 - 1959.
ECUADOR S/2.20
VISITA DEL CANCILLER BRASILEÑO
ECUADOR S/2,00
EXCMO. SEÑOR RICHARD M. NIXON VICEPRESIDENTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS NORTEAMERICA
VISITA DEL VICEPRESIDENTE
Vicenta Bonilla,
2a. Avenida Sur, #17,
Sensuntepeque,
El Salvador, C.A.
CORREOS DE EL SALVADOR C.A.
25 CENTAVOS
2 CENTAVOS
CORREOS DE EL SALVADOR C.A.
"Asista usted a los solemnes festejos del 5o Aniversario de la Revolución - 13 y 14 de Diciembre de 1958".
CORREO AEREO
VIA AIR MAIL
Miss Hope Sheldon,
3611 Congress Avenue,
Dallas, 19,
Texas.
EE.UU.
NOV 8 1958
SENSUNTEPEQUE
DEPARTAMENTO DE CABAÑAS

THE TRAVELLING POST OFFICES OF CENTRAL AMERICA: AN INTRODUCTION

by V DENIS VANDERVELDE

Foreword

Travelling post offices have been run over most government controlled railway lines in the Central American Republics at some time or other, and postal material from many of these services is not particularly rare. However there seems to be a dearth of published information on them.

The Railway Routes

With very few exceptions, the railway systems of Central America are discrete i.e. each Republic's network (if that is not too grandiose a word) is self contained, and services are run with very little attention to those "next door". As I understand it, the following listing by individual country is therefore complete; though where lines have been closed, I have probably missed recording them.

Costa Rica

There are now 800 miles of line, of which 326 miles is controlled by the once British owned Northern Railway. The latter's principal line of 103 miles, was begun in the late 1870's to link Puerto Limon, on the Caribbean, with Cartago and the capital, San José. In San José, the principal railway station now handles two trains daily on this route, and one to Heredia and Alajuela, a local run to the N.W. of the city. The Government owned Pacific Electric Railway runs out of a station in the south of the city, and operates five times daily to Puntarenas, on an inlet of the Pacific Ocean (83 miles). In the S.E. corner of the country, close to the Panama frontier, some 200 miles of line service the United Fruit Co. port of Golfito, much the busiest in the country.

All Costa Rican railways are 42 inch guage, and there is a link between the Northern and Pacific Electric systems.

El Salvador

This is the most densely populated, as well as the smallest of the Republics, and seceded from Guatemala in 1841. The Salvador Railway Co. runs trains west from San Salvador to Sonsonate, and then south to the port of Acajutla, with a branch to the N.W. to Santa Ana. Santa Ana is also served by the International Railway Co. of Central America from Guatemala and Metapan (near the border), a line which continues westwards to Ahuachapan. The International Railway Co. also operates east of the capital, with a meandering line via Cojutepeque, San Vincente, Zacatecoluca, Usulután and San Miguel to the port of La Unión (8 hours train time), on the Pacific Gulf of Fonseca. From La Unión, there is a ferry to Corinto, in Nicaragua.

Honduras

This sparsely populated Republic has a railway network only in the northern part of the country, near the Caribbean. As the very useful South American Handbook puts it, "there are no railways at all where most of the people live, in the west; even the capital has the rare distinction of not being served". The 59 mile National Railway links Puerto Cortés with San Pedro Sula and Potrerillos, to the south. There is now one train daily in each direction.

Nicaragua

This, the largest of the Republics, is the same size as England and Wales, but there are fewer than 32 persons per square mile. 90% of the population live in the west, which is the only part of the country served by railway. The sole company is the Pacific Railway Co., a 217 mile, single track route of 42 inch gauge.

As originally conceived in 1878, it was to have comprised two lines. The western line would have run from the Pacific Port of Corinto to Chinandega, and from there parallel to the coast, via Leon until it reached Lake Managua, the shore of which it would have followed up to the Volcano of Momotombo. The eastern line ran from the city of Managua to Granada, on Lake Nicaragua. The two railway lines were to be connected by a regular lake steamer service between Momotombo and Managua.

The (western) section from Corinto to Chinandega opened on 1 January 1881, and the extension to Leon on 15 November 1882. The spur from Leon up to Momotombo was completed on 30 December 1883. The eastern line was delayed, and the Managua to Masaya section did not open until 5 April 1885. It was extended to Granada on 1 March 1886. From 1884 to 1903, five small steamers carried passengers, freight and mail between Momotombo and Managua.

In February 1903, a rail link between Momotombo and Managua was opened, so that it became possible to travel by train the 127 miles from Corinto to Granada, via Momotombo junction (the 8 miles of track to Momotombo itself was abandoned).

From Masaya, a spur to Diriamba on the Pacific was opened in April 1899. A three mile branch from Chinandega to El Viejo was opened in 1895 and abandoned in 1917. Further spurs from Chinandega to Kilometre 29·82, and from Leon to Kilometre 85 via San Fernando, have since been opened.

Panama

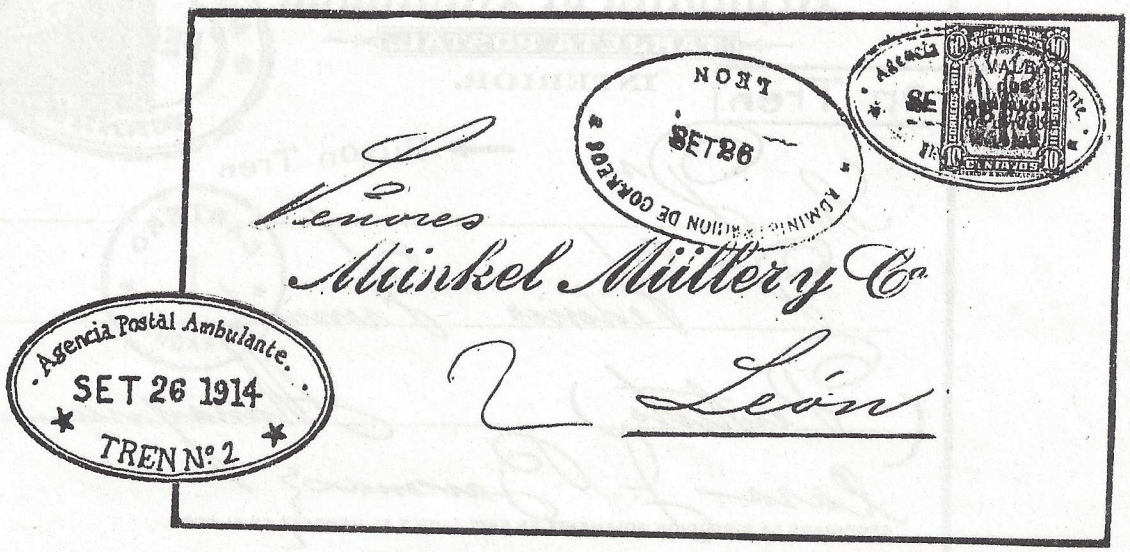
The Republic of Panama has only two railway lines. One, in the extreme west of the country, close to the border with Costa Rica, runs south from Concepción to the port of Armuelles in one direction, and to David and Pedregal in the other. Much more important is the American owned Panama Railroad, which runs closely along the west bank of the Canal from Colon to Panama City: Colon is better known to postal historians by its former name of Aspinwall, after one of the founders of the railway. There are seven trains a day now in each direction. In Panama City the original railway station is now the H.Q. of the bus service.

Guatemala

I content myself with quoting "The South American Handbook" (Trade and Travel Publications Ltd, Bath).

"The only railway (apart from the Government's Verapaz Railway, 29 miles, and a few private branch lines on the United Fruit Company's estates), is the Guatemalan Railways, bought by the State from a US company, International Railways of Central America, in 1968. This railway links the Caribbean seaboard with the Pacific littoral, running from Puerto Barrios up the Motagua valley to Guatemala City and on to the port of San José. From Santa Maria, a branch line runs west through Mazatenango to the ports of Champerico and Ocós and the Mexican frontier, where northbound passengers change trains at Tecun Uman. From Zacapa, half-way from Puerto Barrios to the Capital, a branch line runs south to San Salvador. There are 539 miles of public service railways and 180 miles of plantation lines."

Illustrated on page 10 are two T.P.O. covers from the collection of Kilian Nathan, who was kind enough to send us photocopies. They are of Nicaraguan origin, and are not common. The third marking is from Mike Birks' collection, as is the cover below (reduced) which incorporates the word "Tren" in the postmark (inset - full size).



BUZON del TREN

Señores

Münkel, Müller & Co.

BUZON del TREN

NICARAGUA

10 CENTAVOS 10

Sirla

TREN Nº 2

Elena Sirlela, &

Managua

BUZON TREN

BUZON TREN

TREN Nº 2

Casa de Dr Alejandro Robleto

República de Nicaragua

TARJETA POSTAL.

INTERIOR.

Buzon Tren

→ Buzon Tren

NICARAGUA

2 CENTAVOS 2

Sr Dr

Dr Federico Fernandez

Dentista Managua

Casa J. Barcenas

CARTERO 1 MANAGUA

ESCRIBASE LA DIRECCION SOLAMENTE EN ESTE LADO Y EL MENSAJE EN EL OTRO.